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AN EPISTLE TO FRIENDS

Concerning the Preſent and Succeeding

TIMES.

Being a Faithful Exhortation and Warning to all Friends, who profeſs the Truth, to beware of the manifold Wiles of the Enemy, and to ſtand armed in the Light of the Lord God of Heaven and Earth, againſt his Aſſaults, that ſo they may be ready to anſwer the Call and requirings of the Lord.

Alſo ſomething ſignified of the Miſery of the Succeeding Times, that all may be prepared, and that the Evil Day may not overtake any unawares, but ſuch as turn away their Ear from Counſel.

By one who is a Traveller in the Way of Peace, and hath good Will towards all Men, and more eſpecially to the Houſhold of Faith, STEPHEN CRISP.

Let him that hath an Ear, hear what the Spirit ſaith to the Churches.

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L04

An Epiſtle to Friends concerning the Preſent and Succeeding Times.

Dear Friends,

YOU whom the Lord hath reached unto in this the day of His Love, and hath made known the Way of Truth and Righteouſneſs unto you, through the raiſing up of that holy living Witneſs of himſelf, that long lay hid and buried in you, and hath brought you to a ſecret feeling of ſomething in you, that is worth the minding and regarding; and the Lord cauſing this to appear in the day of your ſeeking, as a Light, diſcovering Darkneſs, and its Power, by which ye were formerly holden, and given you by his Spirit a ſenſe and ſecret Hope, that in this Light, the way of Deliverance was to be attained unto; this Hope made you not aſhamed of the Light which before you hated, but you came to know and embrace it, even while others ſtill hated it, and you for its ſake; yet your Hearts being affected with the hope that did appear therein, could not but joyn unto it, as to make publick Profeſſion of

it for its own ſake; and for no other ends or deſigns, or intereſt at all, but with reſolution in that Light, to wait for the Salvation of God. Dear Friends, it is you aforementioned that both now, and for ſome Daies and Weeks my Heart hath been deeply exerciſed concerning, even Night and Day; and the aboundings of the Fathers Love doth often overcome me, and draws me forth now to ſay and write theſe things unto you for your Admonition and Eſtabliſhment; and indeed it is you who did thus rightly own the way of Truth, and knew your believing to be the Gift and Mercy of God to your Souls, that I do aim at; for thoſe that have taken up the profeſſion of the precious Truth upon by-reſpects and ſiniſter ends, and but for Reaſons propounded in their Carnal minds; tho I do pity them, yet I have not much at this time to ſay to them but this, *The Day ſhall declare them, and their Garments ſhall not hide them.*

But you, Oh my Friends, who had fellowſhip with us, in the deep travels of our beginnings, and did come to Truth the ſame way, and have known the power and vertue of it, many times overcoming you in your inward Man, which hath made you cry out, *Lord, evermore give us of this Bread*; and hath made you as a watred Garden: Oh Friends! how ſhall I expreſs or ſignifie unto you thoſe

Long-

Longings, those ardent Desires and earnest Breathings of my Soul, that you, even you, might abide to the end of all Trials and Tribulations, Adversities, and might inherit that Crown of Immortality that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and might not by any means be bereft thereof; this is singly my travel in Body and Spirit, that you might be kept and preserved out of all the subtil Snares of the wicked One, which hunts for the Soul, even of those that have believed; And therefore in dear and tender love, I have a few things to write unto you for the clearing of my Conscience, and discharging my duty in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord give you all a tender and an understanding Heart, that both you and I may yet have cause daily to praise the Lord in the glorious Light of his Salvation, which he hath manifested amongst us by the revealing his Son Jesus Christ, to whom belongs *Dominion, Honour and Glory forever, Amen.*

And first, dear Friends, it is in my Heart to put you in remembrance of that by which we were called and convinced, which as a Foundation Principle was laid in and among you, and it being unchangable and unalterable in it self, doth therefore admit of no alteration or change in those that are rightly kept to it.

It was a Light which arose in our Hearts, and shined forth from God, the Father of Lights, carrying in its appearance the Nature and Property of God, both in its condemning Evil, which the Enemy had sown or planted in us; and owning, allowing, and justifying every thing that was good and honest, just and equal; even those Thoughts in our Hearts which were of turning towards the Lord, and seeking his Righteousness; these thoughts were justified and encouraged by the Light, and all the contrary discovered and judged, as they were brought to it to be tryed. Now this Light did our Souls rejoyce in, as they had good cause, tho it took away our former Rejoycings; our Pleasures in Vanities and Iniquity died, our Glory in this World withered, our Friendship with the Sons of men decayed, and we stood in the Light and saw all these things, and were not sorry at it, but waited daily to see these things more and more brought to pass; neither was there a permitting our Thoughts to go out, how we might prevent those Damages, or repair these Losses, but the Cross of Christ was indeed our glorying or rejoycing; and the Hope that was before us, did make us despise the Pleasures, Treasures and Honours, Friendship and Delights of this World; and in those daies you grew into a feeling of the heavenly

Joy,

Joy, where the hundred fold was witneſſed in your Boſoms, and the Zeal of the Lord was kindled by his own Spirit in you, againſt whatſoever this Light of Jeſus in the Conſcience did witneſs againſt; and the Lord beheld your Integrity, and bleſſed you, and multiplied you, and added to your ſtrength and ſtature, and then did the Fruits of this glorious Work abound among you, in three more general and ſpecial effects; by which effects, or by their continuance among you, let all now come to ſearch and try themſelves, that ſo, dear Friends, thoſe that have continued faithful in them all, may perſevere in like manner to the end: and thoſe, who upon true ſearch do find, that they have failed, and faln ſhort in all or any of them, may make haſt to Repent, and to turn to that which was the Root of them all, that they may not be found as fruitleſs and withered Branches, in the day that cometh, leſt they be cut off, and utterly conſumed, and blotted out from among the living Branches of the Vine; for a day cometh that Truth will look into the Fig-tree for Fruit, and leaves will not defend it from the Curſe and Blaſting.

The three eſpecial *Fruits* that did ſpring forth from this bleſſed Root and were and are to continue and encreaſe in us and amongſt us to the end, are theſe:

1. *Pu-*

1. *Purity*, manifeſted in a Godly Converſation.

2. *Unity*, manifeſted in dear and tender Love one towards another.

3. *Faithfulneſs*, manifeſted in bearing conſtant and faithful Teſtimony to the things we had received and believed, tho it were unto great loſs and ſufferings.

And againſt all theſe doth the wicked one appear, to ſee if he can make you barren concerning them, and that with divers Wiles and Subtilties, that he may prevail on you and not be known to be the Enemy, but might ſo overcome you, as that you might both ſubmit to him, and then plead for him and his Snares and Wiles, as being juſt, right, lawful, prudent, convenient, *&c.* But, Oh dear Friends, let all be watchful and diligent to wait in the ſence and true feeling of that Seed that never fell nor was beguiled; and you will (even the leaſt of you) ſee and comprehend his workings and transformings, and be delivered from them.

1. *Purity and Holineſs* was a Fruit in you, which doth yet flouriſh in many (*bleſſed be the Lord*) who are as watchful and careful to approve themſelves in obedience to the Light of Truth in their inward parts, as ever, and find as great a neceſſity both of trying and judging with its Judgment as ever; theſe having

ing thus waited have renewed their ſtrength into this very day, and do mount up as upon the Wings of an Eagle; theſe are neither weary in *running*, nor faint they in their walking; But alas! Friends, even theſe do know with how great and manifold aſſaults they have been aſſaulted, and known and ſee with ſorrow of heart how the aſſault hath prevailed upon ſome, by working into the mind a ſecret Liberty, and ſuppoſed Enlargedneſs, whereby a Careleſneſs hath entred ſome, and they having no Keeper, but the meaſure of Light revealed in their hearts and Conſciences, ſo ſoon as they came to be perſwaded to ſlight the Reproofs of that, they ſoon erred; and this ſuppoſed Liberty entred, *That now, after ſo many years ſtrictneſs and circumſpection, they ſhould not need now to ſtand ſo ſtraitly to try things and words as at firſt, becauſe now a day of more Liberty was come*; and this Liberty ſecretly prevailed againſt that pure fear that once was placed in their hearts, and againſt the very obedience of Truth, inwardly in the ſubjection of the mind, and then it became manifeſt outwardly; the Actions ſometimes blame-worthy, the Words and Speech again corrupted, and run into the old Channel of the World, like them again, and the ſingle pure Language, learned in the Light, in the time of their poverty and ſimplicity,

plicity, almoſt loſt and forgotten, and ſo the work of God which he wrought, in a manner laid waſte; and then, when this Liberty is entred, and made uſe of, as aforeſaid, ofttentimes a ſecret ſubtilty ariſeth againſt the judgment of Truth, either from within, or from any outwardly, that are grieved with this looſe and careleſs kind of ſpeaking or acting, which ſubtilty leads to contend for it againſt the Judgment, telling the Creature, *Why theſe things are but ſmall things, and little things, and what, we muſt not ſtrain at a Gnat, and ſuch like.* Oh my Friends! beware of theſe evil ſuggeſtions of the wicked one: How came they to be ſmall and little things, ſeeing they were great things with us in the beginning? And how comes an offence in this Nature to be light now, ſeeing it was heavy in the beginning? Oh let not the greateſt Mercies of our God ſo fill us, as to make us ſlight or forget the leaſt obedience, but rather let the continuance of his Mercy the more quicken you up unto a Zeal for his Name and Truth in all things, to be found doing and ſpeaking according to the Rule of Righteouſneſs, which ye learned in the Light, in the day of your being low and little, and then nothing will riſe up and be exalted in the multitude of Gods Mercies, but that holy Birth which lives in Purity when it is at higheſt;

t; and ſo that life of Righteouſneſs will
ſo thine forth more and more, which glo-
manifies God and ſeeks his honour. Dear Friends,
ber that ye might be ſo kept unto the end, is the
, oreathing and travel of my Soul: and that
th where this neglect hath entred, and this afore-
, oaid Corruption either in Speech or *Action* is
vit to be found, that ye would receive the Word
act of Exhortation in meekneſs and fear, in which
r it, t was written unto you, and may redeem
ure, he time, for the daies are and ſhall be Evil,
tt le and none will hold the Myſtery of the Faith
at (that ſaves from falling in the Evil day) but
: of ſuch as do keep the pure and undefiled Con-
ow ſcience, which none can do but by perſiſting
ng and continuing in the daily Sanctification of
in- the Spirit, and belief and obedience of the
a- Truth.

in A ſecond Fruit that was brought forth
r- from this good Root, was *Unity and Love* one
ht towards another; which bleſſed be the Lord,
et is preciouſly preſerved in and among many to
:- this very day; who are ſo ſenſible of the di-
d vers operations of Truth in them, to be all
d by one Spirit, that they are ſtill kept of one
- heart and mind, given up freely to ſerve the
e Lord in ſingleneſs of heart in their Generati-
on; and are in this good work as Strength-
ners and Encouragers of one another; but
notwithſtanding the Enemy hath been exceed-

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ing buſie to lay waſte and deſtroy this ble
effect alſo, and that under divers Preten
which the Lord ſtill diſcovered by his o
Light and Spirit in his People, who have ſ
gly waited upon him; but many have be
his Wiles, ſometimes fitting and prepari
Veſſels to riſe up in the fleſhly and ſenſu
Wiſdom, and to traduce and bring in corr
and evil Doctrines, to try who were not ſoun
in the Faith, that they may draw them aſi
into a heat and zeal for ſomething which ha
not its Root in the Truth, and which the
that abode in the Truth could not own, bu
judge and condemn in the Name of the Lord
which when ſuch ſaw, they took thereat oc
caſion of ſtriving to propagate and promot
that which they ſaw withſtood; ſo having
loſt ſubjection to the Spirit of Truth in them-
ſelves, which would have kept them in Uni-
ty in the Body; and having alſo loſt and
laid by their ſubjection to them that were over
them in the Lord, they then grew ſtubborn
and wilful, and proceeded in more zeal for
that which ſtood in oppoſition to the Truth,
than ever they did for the Truth it ſelf; and
theſe ſometimes have prevailed to the ſubver-
ting whole Houſholds, and have turned ſeve-
ral from the Faith and Simplicity that is in
the Goſpel, who, as well as thoſe that ſubver-
ted them, have loſt the fellowſhip of the
Saints,

Saints, and the ſavour of Life, either in themſelves or others, and then the Enemy perſwaded them, all are dead to the Life but themſelves; and ſo they grow to have a tickling Joy in what they do and ſay, in obedience to that perverſe and ſingular private Spirit, and ſo grow up to ſpeak evil of Dignities, and are unruly, and dare to ſpeak againſt Heaven, and them that dwell and inhabit in it, whom God makes to ſhine as Stars in the Firmament of his Power; but alas for them! my Soul pities them, when I ſee how they ſport themſelves with their own deceivings; but the day of the Lord is among his People, which hath and doth make them and their Spirit manifeſt, and their Fruits alſo have made them manifeſt.

Another Way that the Enemy ſeeks to break the Unity, and diſſolve the Bond of Amity, is, by ſowing a Seed of Jealouſie and Prejudice in the Hearts of ſuch in whom he can get an Entrance; that ſo they may ceaſe from the true and unfeigned Love and that upon a pretended Reaſon, becauſe of this or that, which is ſuppoſed or imagined, in the evil parts in themſelves, againſt others; giving heed to evil Thoughts or Surmiſes, which break forth many times in Whiſperings and Tale-baring; which tho the thing ſuppoſed to be evil, were really ſo; yet this is not to be al-

allowed or given way to among you, but to uſe plainneſs one towards another, and ſingle-heartedneſs; and to ſhut out the Evil One in this his ſubtil appearance alſo. Oh dear Friends! remember how the Lord hath dealt with you, and deal you ſo one by another; he hath not ſought Occaſions againſt you, but hath long born and ſuffered, and exerciſed much Patience and Tenderneſs towards you; yet plainly reproving the Evil in you, and not treaſuring it up againſt you. Oh Friends! be like-minded one towards another, that the Enemy of your Peace and Concord may be defeated, and you preſerved entire to one Head, even to Chriſt Jeſus; and ye may be one, and the Name of the Lord may be one among you; and that which tends to the making cold your Love, may be judged in all; and ſo Brotherly Love will continue with you to the End.

Another way which the Enemy works to ſcatter, and to bring from this Unity, is, by leading ſome, who have believed, into ſome Sin and Iniquity, which the Body (that are in the Truth) are conſtrained to appear in Judgment againſt for the Truth's ſake; and yet notwithſtanding the Party ſo ſinning, being above the witneſs in themſelves, which would bring them to own the Judgment of the Spirit of Chriſt in his Church, they exalt themſelves

themſelves above the Judgment, and ſeek to gain to them ſuch whom they can enter by their words and Complaints, to take part with them againſt the Judgment, and thoſe that paſſed it. Such were thoſe whoſe words *did eat* (the Apoſtle ſaid) *as a Canker*, of whom the Believers in thoſe daies were to be aware; for commonly ſuch as have gone from the Power, that ſhould have kept them clean and upright, they will alſo turn againſt the power in thoſe that abide in it, eſpecially if they be drawn forth to reprove and rebuke them: but let all ſuch know, that's not the way to be renewed; and let all that take part with any that work Iniquity, know, that they do but defile their own Souls thereby, and do but rend themſelves from that Body which they cannot proſper out of. And therefore, dear Friends, beware of joyning with that in your ſelves or in others, which the Power goeth againſt, let the Pretences be what they will; for that which doth Evil, will alwaies be apteſt to ſow evil Complainings of others; and ſuch as are in the unſatisfied Murmurings againſt Judgment paſſed upon them, are much to be feared; for they hereby render themſelves to be the more guilty, and yet the further from Repentance. But, dear Friends, watch unto that which gives you a living feeling of the living Body,

which is the Church, that in all things you may demean your ſelves as true Members of it, ſerving one another in Love, and ſubmitting your ſelves one unto another for the Lord's ſake: That in all plainneſs and Singleneſs, as becometh the Truth, you may ſeek to preſerve the Unity which the Enemy of Truth and Peace doth envy; ſo ſhall ye continue to ſtrengthen one anothers hand in every good work, and this ſhall tend to the weakening of the hands of your Enemies, who ſeek to divide you, that they might rule over you. Many other Deſigns doth the wicked one try, daily to break and divide, more than can now be named or here inſerted; but they are all out of the Light, and if you be in it, you will ſee them, and that will preſerve you; for its one, and did make us o e, and will keep us to be of one heart and mind to the end, if we abide in it

3. The *third good effect* which Truth di work in the beginning in them who did truly receive it, was *Zeal* and *Faithfulneſs* to Go in the beating Teſtimony to what was man feſt, tho through great Sufferings; in which, Friends abide in the Root, they do daily e creaſe in Power, to fulfil the ſame Teſtimon for the mercy of the Lord doth engage the and his anſwer of Peace in the midſt of th Tryals, doth Arm them and encourage the

and they do hold out to the end; and for such the Lord hath alwaies made a way, better than they could have made for themselves. Yet the Enemy hath in this matter also been very busie,& hath prevailed with some under divers Considerations,or rather Consultations, which he hath propounded unto them.But,O Friends,be ye all watchful,& take heed lest any of the testimonies of truth be laid wast; for that which leads to be weary of bearing Witness to the Truth, and to lay it Waste, the same will lay thee Waste, and bring thee into such a State, as thou wilt want the Truth to bear witness for thee; and tho it be hard for Flesh and Blood (which hath no Kingdom but here) to fall into the hands of Unreasonable Men, yet it is a more fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the Living God; and therefore, let all Lukewarm ones, who are neither hot nor cold, be now awakned, and all that have gone backwards be warned to *return to their First-Love, else the Lord will come against them, and the day hastens that will divide such their Portion among Hypocrites, except they Repent.*

But to touch at some of the Reasons or Arguments, which he that abode not in the Truth himself, useth to draw others into this kind of Treacherous Backsliding.

First, He appears to some, to perswade them, That their former Testimony was born

more from an imitation of others, than from a work of the Power of God in themselves; and that now, they not finding the Thing required of them, they may leave off their Testimonies, or may do such things as they have denied formerly; this Snare doth the Enemy make use of in these daies. But mark who it is that he hath caught with it; none but such who sometimes were Low in their minds, and dare not grieve the Spirit of God in themselves, nor others, but for the Truths-sake could give up all things rather than their Testimony; but in time growing careless and loose in waiting, lost that subject state, and grew high and exalted in their Minds above the Cross that should have crucified the betraying Wisdom; and so having lost the true exercise of the Power, and the feeling of the Excellency and Worth of the Truth, they knew not the Requirings of the Lord; and the earthly mind got up, that placed a greater esteem upon Earthly Things, than upon Things that are Eternal; and so things that once thou offeredest up to God, thou takest again into thine own hand, and so robbest the Lord, and groweſt careful about outward things, as other *Gentiles* are; and to cover thy shame therein, the Enemy then tempts thee to bely the Power that once wrought in thy Heart, and made thee afraid to Act

again

againſt the Light, or to deny the *Teſtimony* for God in ſuch things as was manifeſt, and then ſaiſt, thou didſt it by imitation; but thou ſhalt know thy Covering is too narrow in the day that haſteth upon thee.

Another Temptation that the Enemy preſenteth, is, That tho thou art convinced what to do, or what thou ſhouldſt deny, yet the Tryals are ſo hard and ſo many, and Perſecutors wax worſe and worſe, ſo that thou ſhalt not hold out to the end; and where he can get entrance with this Bait, he preſently cauſeth an Evil Heart of unbelief and Doubting to ariſe, which takes away even the ſtrength which the Lord did give, and ſo feebleneſs doth enter the Mind, and a Spirit of Bondage leads thee to fear again; and then comes the Diſpute in thy Heart whether thou ſhalt ſtand with the Power of God, in the Obedience, or whether thou ſhalt fall under that Power that ariſeth againſt God, and his Truth and People? and in this Combate thou haſt a ſubtil Enemy, uſing many devices to betray thee, and a part in thy ſelf, not yet mortified, that is ready to ſay, *Pity thy Self, Pity thy Wife, Pity thy Children, and Pity thy Relations*; which it may be ſometimes, are all as ſo many Inſtruments of Satan to ſeduce thee, and lead thee into Darkneſs, that thou mayſt not ſee ſo great neceſſity in thy bearing up thy

Teſtimony as indeed there is, nor ſo great a danger in the contrary as indeed there is.

Oh Friends! at ſuch a time as this, where is there any help but in the Lord? Where canſt thou find a Saviour, but in that Light which gives to diſtinguiſh of the ſeveral Voices? Now it is good for thee to remember, that *if thou walkeſt after the Fleſh, thou muſt and ſhalt ſurely Die and Wither.* In ſuch a time flee, flee to the Lord, wait in his Dread to feel thy ſtrength but renewed at the preſent and take no care for ſtrength next *Month*, next *Year*, or next *Tryal*, for *God is God, and changeth not, and will be the ſame to thee in Seven Tryals as in Six, if thou believe and wait on him in uprightneſs*; and therefore fear not man, but truſt in the Lord, all ye that have known and felt his Power, and let not in the Enemy of your Souls by the Door of *Carnal Reaſoning*, but keep that ſhut; and rather conſider, how the Enemy makes thee as a rejoycing among his own Children, and ſtrengthens that hope in them of their overcoming all others, as well as thee; which hope is Curſt, and ſhall be Confounded: And conſider, that if thou letteſt fall thy Teſtimony, which thou haſt once born for the Lord, thou makeſt the Heart of the Righteous ſad, and makeſt their Travail through that Teſtimony the harder for them, by reaſon of thy encouraging their Adverſaries by the hope afore ſaid

ſaid. And whatever thou doſt, *They muſt go thorow to the End who will inherit the Crown of Immortality.*

And again conſider, It may be that thy backſliding, or cowardly drawing away the Shoulder, may prove a Diſcouragement to others, and they may ſtumble in thy ſtumbling, and fall with thee, and never be able to riſe, and ſo thou bring their Blood alſo upon thee. Oh, remember alſo that Servant of the Lord, who could ſay, *Pſal.* 119. 157. *My Perſecutors are encreaſed, but my Heart doth not decline thy Teſtimonies.* That was a noble Spirit becoming the Souldiers of Chriſt; yea, *tho perſecuted by Princes*, as he ſaith, Verſe 161.

Dear Friends, Let your Minds be ſtirred up to be zealous for the Lord, in this the great day of Controverſie with Darkneſs and its Power. Who hath God to bear Witneſs to his Name but you? Among whom hath he made it known as among you? Who have given up themſelves to the Lord as you have done? Well, *Bleſſed are they that keep Covenant with the Lord, for they ſhall ſee his Glory.*

One more ſubtil Snare of the Enemy in this matter is in my Heart to mention, that is this, *viz.* To perſwade thee for once, ſometimes to do that which the Light hath made manifeſt, with a purpoſe afterwards to be more

Faithful. Oh Friends, In the Name and fear of the Lord, I exhort and warn you all to take heed of this, for this will prove but a falſe Confidence, thou wilt find this kind of going out of the Guidance of Truth, to be a dear Out-going to thee; for if ever thou doſt return, it will be very hardly, and with bitter Anguiſh of Soul. Oh! do not tempt the Lord on this wiſe, *leſt it do prove impoſſible upon thy ſinning willingly to renew or reſtore thee again by Repentance*; thou wilt have thy *Pottage*, but wilt *loſe the Bleſſing*, *tho thou may ſeek it with Tears*; for while thou *wenteſt out*, *behold*, *thy way became hedged up*, and the *Thorny Nature* got up in thee, and ſo thou art *debarred* and *fenced out* from enjoying thy former ſtate; Sin being entred, Death ſoon follows. Oh remember *Sampſon*, who when he had diſcloſed the Token of a *Nazarite*, in which ſtate he ſtood in Covenant with God; yet thought to have ſhaken himſelf, and to have gone forth in his Strength, as at other times, but was miſtaken, *Judg.* 16. 20. *For the Lord was departed from him, tho he knew it not.* And ſo, tho thou haſt known the Lord's Preſence and Power in thy Veſſel, yet take heed of letting in that Treacherous Spirit, to lead thee to Unfaithfulneſs, and to betray the leaſt of his Truſts and Teſtimonies committed to thee, tho it be but for once; for there-

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by thou wilt render thy ſelf unworthy to be found a Witneſs of his Power another time; for the Lord will leave that Veſſel, and often doth, and chuſeth other Veſſels to manifeſt himſelf in, that will be more True and Faithful.

So, dear Friends, in true and Tender Love I have laid theſe things before you, that ye might all be ſtirred up and provoked to Love, and to good Works, that ye might abound in the Grace committed to you; and none of you who have known the Truth, might be entangled with the Wiles of your ſubtil Enemy, and that you that have begun well, might not loſe the things that ye have wrought, but might perſevere in well-doing till ye have finiſhed your Courſe in peace. And Friends, this is the Joy and delight of thoſe that labour among you in the Lord, and hereby is our Hand ſtrengthened, and our Hearts refreſhed, when we do find ye ſuch as we deſire ye ſhould be, even ſtedfaſt in the Truth; and then alſo do you find us to you-ward, ſuch as ye deſire we ſhould be, even a refreſhing in the fellowſhip of Life unto you, and our God comforts us together, in the mutual joy and comfort of his holy Spirit, working in us and you.

And Friends, I am the more drawn forth at this time to viſit you with an Epiſtle, becauſe the Lord hath given me ſome ſight of his great

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and dreadful Day, and Workings in it, which is at hand, and greatly haſtens, of which I have ſomething to ſay unto you, that ye may be prepared to ſtand in his Day, and may behold his wondrous Working among his Enemies, and have fellowſhip with his Power therein, and may not be diſmayed nor driven away in the Tempeſt, which will be great.

And as concerning thoſe ſucceeding Times, the Spirit of the Lord hath ſignified, that they will be Times of Horror and Amazement, to all that have, and yet do reject his Counſel: for as the daies of his Forbearance, Warning and Inviting, hath been long, ſo ſhall his appearance amongſt thoſe that have withſtood him, be Fierce and Terrible; even ſo terrible, as who ſhall abide his coming? for the Lord will work both ſecretly and openly, and his Arm ſhall be manifeſt to his Children in both.

Secretly he ſhall raiſe up a continual fretting anguiſh amongſt his Enemies, one againſt another, ſo that being vexed and tormented inwardly, they ſhall ſeek to make each other miſerable, and delight therein for a little ſeaſon; and then the Prevailer muſt be prevailed over, and the digger of the Pit muſt fall therein; and the confidence that men have had one in another ſhall fail, and they will beguile and betray one another, both about the counſel help

counsel and strength; and as they have banded themselves to break you, whom God hath gathered, so shall they band themselves one against another, to break, to spoil, and destroy one another; and thorow the multitude of their Treacheries, all credit or belief, upon the account of their solemn engagement, shall fail; so that few men shall count themselves, or what is theirs, safe in the hand of his Friend, who hath not chosen his safety and friendship in the pure Light of the unchangable Truth of God; and all the secret Counsels of the Ungodly shall be brought to nought, sometimes by the means of some of themselves, and sometimes by impossibilities lying in their way, which shall make their Hearts fail of ever accomplishing what they have determined; and in this state shall men fret themselves for a season, and shall not be able to see the Hand that turns against them, but shall turn to fight against one thing, and another, and a third thing, and shall stagger, and reel in Counsel and Judgment, as drunken men that know not where to find the way to Rest; and when they do yet stir themselves up against the holy People, and against the holy Covenant of Light, and them that walk in it, they shall but the more be confounded; for they shall be helped with a little help, which all the

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Ungodly ſhall not hinder them of, to wit, the ſecret Arm of the Lord, maintaining their Cauſe, and raiſing up a Witneſs in the very Hearts of their Adverſaries to plead their Innocency, and this ſhall make them yet the more to vex themſelves, and to go thorow hard-beſtead; for when they ſhall look upward to their Religion, to their Power, Policy, or Preferments, or Friendſhips, or whatſoever elſe they had truſted in, and relied upon, they ſhall have cauſe to curſe it; and when they look downwards to the Effects produced by all thoſe things, behold, then trouble, and horrour, and vexation takes hold on them, and drives them to Darkneſs; and having no help but what is Earthly, and being out of the knowledge of the mighty overturning Power of the Lord God Almighty, they ſhall deſpair and ware out their daies with Anguiſh; and beſides all this, the terrible hand of the Lord is, and ſhall be openly manifeſted againſt this ungodly Generation, by bringing grievous and terrible Judgments and Plagues upon them, tumbling down all things in which their Pride and Glory ſtood, and overturning, overturning, even the Foundations of their ſtrength; yea, the Lord will lay waſte the Mountain of the Ungodly, and the ſtrength of the fenced City ſhall fail, and who

Iſa. 8.

men ſhall ſay, *We will take Refuge in them, Nahum.* 3. 12, 13. they ſhall become but a Snare, and there ſhall the Sword devour: And when they ſhall ſay, *We will go into the Field, and put truſt in the Number and Courage of our Souldiers,* they ſhall both be taken away; and this Evil alſo will come of the Lord, and his hand will be ſtretched out ſtill, and ſhall bring Confuſion, Ruin upon Ruin, and War upon War; and the Hearts of men ſhall be ſtirred in them, and the Nations ſhall be as Waters, into which a Tempeſt, a ſwift Whirl-wind is entred, and even as Waves ſwell up to the diſſolution one of another, and breaking one of another, ſo ſhall the ſwellings of People be: And becauſe of the hardſhip and ſorrow of thoſe daies, many ſhall ſeek and deſire Death rather than Life.

Ah! my Heart relents and is moved within me in the ſence of theſe things, and much more than I can write or declare, which the Lord will do in the Earth, and will alſo make haſt to accompliſh among the Sons of Men, that they may know and confeſs, *That the Moſt High doth Rule in the Kingdoms of Men, and pulleth down and ſetteth up according to his own Will: - And this ſhall men do before ſeven times paſs over them, and ſhall be content to give their Glory unto him that ſits in Heaven.*

But, Oh Friends! while all theſe things

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are working, and bringing to pass, repose ye your selves in the Munition of that Rock that all these shakings shall not move, even in the knowledge and feeling of the eternal Power of God, keeping you subjectly given up to his Heavenly Will, and feel it daily to kill and mortifie that which remains in any of you, which is of this World; for the worldly part in any, is the changeable part, and that is up and down, full and empty, joyful and sorrowful, as things go well or ill in the World: For as the Truth is but one, and many are made partakers of its Spirit; so the world is but one, & many are partakers of the Spirit of it; and so many as do partake of it, so many will be straitned and perplexed with it; but they who are single to the Truth, waiting daily to feel the Life and Vertue of it in their Hearts, these shall rejoyce in the midst of Adversity; these shall not have their Hearts moved with fear, nor tossed with anguish because of evil Tydings, *Psal.* 112. 7, 8. Because that which fixeth them remains with them: These shall know their entrance with the Bridegroom, and so be kept from sorrow tho his coming be with a noise; and when mid-night is come upon man's Glory, ye they being ready and prepared, it will be well with them, and having a true sence of the Power working in themselves, they cannot but have Unity and Fellowship of it in

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the Earth, and will not at all murmur againſt what is, nor wiſh nor will what is not to be; theſe will be at reſt till the Indignation paſſeth over, and theſe having no Deſign to carry on, nor no Party to promote in the Earth, cannot poſſibly be defeated nor diſappointed in their undertakings.

And when you ſee Diviſions, and Parties, and Rendings in the Bowels of Nations, and Rumours and Tempeſts in the Minds of People, then take heed of being moved to this Party or to that Party, or giving your ſtrength to this or that, or counſelling this way or that way; but ſtand ſingle to the Truth of God, in which neither War, Rent nor Diviſion is; and take heed of that part in any of you, which truſts and relies upon any ſort of the Men of this World, in the Day of their Proſperity; for the ſame party will bring you to ſuffer with them in the time of their *adverſity*, which will not be long after; for ſtability in that Ground there will be none: But when they ſhall ſay, *Come join with us in this or that*, remember you are joined to the Lord by his pure Spirit, to walk with him in Peace and in Righteouſneſs, and you feeling this, this gathers out of all Buſlings, and Noiſes, and Parties, and Tumults, and leads you to exalt the Standard of Truth and Righteouſneſs, in an innocent Converſation, to

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ſee who will flow unto that; and this ſhall be a Refuge for many of the Weary, Toſſed and Afflicted Ones in thoſe days, and a Shelter for many whoſe Day is not yet over.

So dearly beloved Friends and Brethren, who have believed and known the bleſſed Appearance of the Truth, let not your Hearts be troubled at none of theſe things: Oh! let not the things that are at preſent, nor things that are yet to come, move you from ſtedfaſtneſs, but rather double your Diligence, Zeal, and Faithfulneſs to the Cauſe of God: For they that know the Work wrought in themſelves, they ſhall reſt in the Day of Trouble, *Yea, though the Fig-tree fail, and the Vine brings not forth, and the Labour of the Olive-tree ceaſeth, and the Fields yield no Meat, and Sheep be cut off from the Fold, and there be no Bullocks in the Stall, yet then mayeſt thou rejoice in the Lord, and ſing Praiſes to the God of thy Salvation.* Hab. 3. 16, 17.

And how near theſe days are to this poor Nation, few know, and therefore the Cry of the Lord is very loud unto its Inhabitants through his Servants and Meſſengers, that they would prize their time while they have it, leſt they be overturned, waſted and laid deſolate before they are aware; and before Deſtruction come upon them, and there be

no remedy, as it hath already done upon many.

Oh LONDON, LONDON! That thou and thy Rulers would have considered, and hearkened and heard, in the Day of thy Warnings and Invitations, and not have persisted in thy Rebellion, till the Lord was moved against thee, to cut off the Thousands and Multitudes from thy Streets, and the pressing throngings of People from thy Gates, and then to destroy and ruin thy *Streets* also, and lay desolate thy *Gates*, when thou thoughtest to have replenished them again.

And, Oh! saith my Soul, that thy Inhabitants would yet be warned, and perswaded to Repent and Turn to the Lord, by putting away every one the Evil that is in their Hearts, against the *Truth* in your selves, and against those that walk in it, before a greater Desolation and Destruction overtake you.

Oh! what shall I say to prevail with *London*, and with its Inhabitants! The Lord hath called aloud, he hath Roared out of *Zion* unto them, but many of them have not hearkned at all, nor considered at all.

Well, Oh my Friends! (and thou, oh my Soul!) return to your Rest, dwell in the Pavillion of the House of your God, and fear God, and shelter your selves under the Shadow of his Wings, where ye shall be Wit-

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neſſes of his Doings, and ſee his STRANGE ACT brought to paſs, and ſhall not be hurt therewith, nor diſmayed.

Oh my Friends! in the Bowels of dear and tender Love have I ſignified theſe things unto you, that ye might ſtand armed with the whole Armour of God, Cloathed in Righteouſneſs, and your Feet ſhod with the Preparation of the Goſpel of Peace; and freely given up in all things to the diſpoſing of the Lord, who will deliver us, not by Might, nor by Sword, nor Spear, but by his own eternal inviſible Arm, will he yet ſave us and deliver us, and get himſelf a Name by preſerving of us: and we ſhall yet live to praiſe him who is worthy of Glory, of Honour and Renown, from the riſing of the Sun to the ſetting of the ſame, now and forever, *Amen*, *Amen*, ſaith my Soul.

A Poſtſcript.

Dear Friends and Brethren,

I Have ſomething farther in my heart to communicate unto you, in dear and tender Love, and in deſire of your preſervation out of the Snare of your Adverſary; that is, To exhort you all to dwell

te Judgment of the Truth, which is a de-
ce upon your Glory; and let none bereave
u of this under any pretence whatsoever;
t as you come to a true feeling of the Life in
ur selves, to which alone the certain Judg-
ent appertaineth, so let this Life have free-
m, and stop it not from judging all that
hich is at enmity with the Life, and tends
the hurting of the true Plant of God; for
have seen a Harm hath come to many who
ve parted with their Judgment, and so
ve become unarmed, and the Enemy hath
evailed upon them, (under a pretended
enderness) to permit or suffer such things as
ere hurtful to themselves or others; and
ough the Lord hath given them Judgment
d Discerning in the Matter, yet were be-
aved of that Gift, and so by little and little
came beguiled.

Oh dear Friends! consider these days are
rilous times, and it is needful for every one
watch in that same Eternal Light to which
u were first turned, that by its Righteous
dgment ye may be preserved from every
ing in your selves that appears contrary to
at precious Life of which you have tasted:
nd when you have so done, then to take
ed, that the Enemy do not do that by an
strument which (through your watchful-
s in the Light) he could not do without;

and all beware of that affected Tender that crys out, *Be tender to all, and pray for and mind the Good in all, and love all, judge none, but leave Judgment to God*, I say, Heed not the plausible words of Spirit, which being guilty, to save its Head from a stroke, would bereave you your Judgment, which God hath given and is indeed truly his Judgment, and is administred in his Wisdom and Power, the cleansing and keeping clean his Sanctu for such as have no Judgment in their go are they that know not the true way of Pe but make them crooked Paths, *he that g in them shall not know Peace*, Isa. 59. 8.

But some may say, *Was not Christ M and Lowly? and ought not all to be like him?*

'Tis true, my Friends; but there is a di rence between the Seed's Suffering and Reigning, and there are times for them b and when it doth please God to permit Hour and Power of Darkness in the open P secutors, to exalt it self against his Seed People, by Persecution, or such like; th are led by his Spirit to appear in Meekn and Quietness, as a Sheep before the Sheat But what is this to suffering bad and perve Spirits, that appear under pretence of t Truth, and yet are out of the Truth, a

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Tender emies to its prosperity, striving to exalt
ray for d set up another thing instead of the Truth;
e all, ch as these the Lord doth not require you
God, use only Patience and Meekness towards;
ds of t if that will not reclaim them, they must
e its o ow the Judgment of the Truth, and you
ve you it must stand over them; for in this case
iven y e Day of the Exaltation of Christ is come,
nd is t d God is crowning Truth with Dominion
ower, ver every false Spirit, and corrupt Practice
anctu ereof.

ir gos And therefore, dear Friends, eye the Lord
of Pe his goings forth, and as you feel his Life in
hat g ou to witness against any evil and corrupt
3. ing or practice, use Plainness, and keep
ist M ncerity, and turn not Judgment backwards;
like r that which is unwilling to be judged, and
rys out, *Judge none, leave all to God*, &c. the
s a di me will take upon it both to judge and rule,
and ut not in the Wisdom of God; and those
m b at cry out so much for Tenderness, and a-
mit ainst Truth's Judgment, the same are most
pen P ngerous to be drawn out from the patient
eed a ffering in the Spirit of Christ Jesus, when
; th ey ought to appear in the most Meekness,
leekn d to appear rough and wrathful in the
Shea riving and fighting Nature, and are most
perve t to be tempted into a Spirit of Revenge,
of t hath been seen by sad Experience, for they
h, a at lose the exercise of that by which all
En should

should keep Dominion over Deceit, l
lose that strength by which they shoul
enabled to suffer all things for the sake of C
Jesus.

So, Dear Friends, in that which keeps
the Defiler and the Betrayer, all wait u
the Lord, that you may have your Arm
on, and be fortified with the Strength,
the Might, and with the Judgments of G
and keep that under in every place which
der Pretence of Tenderness and Forbear
would make void the Testimony of Tr
or make the Offence of the Cross to ceas
any thing wherein you have been instru
from the beginning, that the Lord may
hold and see Judgment established, and
pleased. *Isa.* 59. *The Lord looked, and th*
was no Judgment, and it displeased him;
thereby Deceit got up, which with it is to
kept down.

So the Lord God of Power and Wisdom pres
you faithful, and fitted for every
Word and Work; the Strong to wa
over the Weak in singleness; and the W
to be subject to the Strong in the L
that so the pure Plant of Righteousness
Truth may grow in and among you all, to
Praise that hath called you; To whom
Glory and Honour forever, Amen.

S. C